

Hazards wait in the wings

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Japan Garden City, a Bangladesh-Japan joint venture, has taken up a massive housing project, overlooking the problems Mohammadpur has been coping with for long.

The Garden City is building 26 16-storey apartments on about 8.5 acres, according to city development authorities, RAJUK.

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK) approved the building plan in 1998, ignoring some of the mandatory procedures.

"The then executive engineer Assaduzzaman himself gave the approval, side-stepping the chief inspector's recommendations -- a normal practice," a RAJUK official said.

Assaduzzaman is serving a one-year suspension on charge of corruption. No further action has been taken against him as yet.

"The RAJUK has earned a bad name not only for the Japan Garden City but also for many other high-rises in Mohammadpur, Lalmatia areas, which were approved when Assaduzzaman was in office," said the RAJUK source.

Assaduzzaman however said, "I am innocent and so have filed a writ

with the High Court against the baseless charges levelled by a vested quarter at RAJUK."

"The investigation against Assaduzzaman is underway and the authorities will take actions against him soon," said RAJUK Chairman Iqbal Uddin Ahmed.

Asked why RAJUK did not take into account the environmental and other hazards of Mohammadpur while approving the Japan Garden City, the RAJUK chairman said, "It was in 2001 when the government seriously thought of the problems of tall-buildings."

"Before that, this project was somehow approved. My assurance is that if anyone now wants to construct high-rise buildings every aspect will be scrutinised," said Iqbal Uddin Ahmed.

Meanwhile, there is a number of housing projects like Mohammadia Housing Limited, Mohammadia Housing Society, Pisciculture Housing and others around the Japan Garden City. The sprawling buildings in the area hardly provide any opportunity for the dwellers to breathe fresh air.

"A monster apartment block like Japan Garden City will have an adverse effect on the entire area. It

will multiply the problems for the Mohammedpur area which is already a concrete jungle," said Rafiq Azam, a city planner.

"The trend of urbanisation will change the behavioural pattern of the next generation. It will make them more selfish and introvert," he added.

Poor water supply, low pressure of gas, frequent blackout and unavailability of the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board's (BTB) cables at Mohammadpur quite often get into newspaper columns.

The authorities of the Japan Garden City have taken permission for two deep tubewells from the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) which usually does not allow it to individuals. The diameter of the pipe of a tubewell is six inches.

Environmentalists frequently express concern about the ever-decreasing water level of Dhaka. Responding to the anxiety, WASA does not sink any deep tubewell.

"How come the WASA has given permission of installing two such fairly big deep tubewells for a small area like Japan Garden City when the water level of Dhaka city is dropping drastically?" asked an environ-

mentalist. It was learnt from the sales office of Japan Garden City that they are planning to install another deep tube-well.

"If they install another one it will pose a threat not only to Mohammadpur but also to the environment of the capital," said Wasim, a resident.

Traffic in front of Japan Garden City clogs everyday. The nearby maxi-stand adds to the congestion.

"I can't even think of a situation when the residents of 2,217 flats will start using this already busy road. If it happens, the whole area will descend into chaos. The government should come forward and find out a solution immediately," said Nasir, another resident.

The inhabitants of Mohammadpur have to face low pressure of gas every winter. "After the start of the Japan Garden City, the whole area may encounter the worst sufferings in winter," Nasir added.

Mohammadpur residents ponder what are the roles of WASA, Titas Gas, BTB and other departments if such giant buildings spring up without a plan.



The sprawling Japan Garden City under construction at Mohammadpur

Fun along the lake

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhanmondi lake area is now a major recreational area in the city. On any given day, from morning till late in the evening, the lush green lakeside area attracts joggers, walkers, families with children, pensioners and scores of couples.

With male and female security guards constantly on the vigil, the lake area assures the visitors of a rare sense of security. The open amphitheatre is a regular spot for theatre and concerts. Although residents of Dhanmondi do not always appreciate the intrusion of thousands into their neighbourhood, still many are happy about the cleanliness of the lake and the greenery.

Sarwan Kader, a retired government official and a Dhanmondi resident, said everyday he and his

wife take long walks around the entire length of the lake.

"It is a rare relief for two of us to be able to walk without any hindrance. The lake area is nicely maintained," Kader said.

Although about 18 months have elapsed since the lake project was complete at a cost of around Tk 20 crore, many of the commercial components are yet to start functioning. For instance, the boat club, swimming club, restaurant and kiosks have all been allocated to different parties. Mysteriously though these are yet to start functioning.

According to sources, the 14-member Dhanmondi Lake and Lakeside Development Advisory Committee, chaired by the Local Government and Rural Develop-

ment secretary and the five-member management committee might soon sit down to decide whether to set a timeframe for the owners to start their shops and restaurants.

The authorities are also thinking of having a top government official inaugurate the lake activities. The contractors of the lake project are yet to remove their work sheds and equipment from the lake area. Sources there said the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has failed to pay the contractor about Tk 1.5 crore in outstanding bills.

"We can hand over the entire lake within two days of notification but so far the DCC has shown no interest," said a source.

The source said the contractor was yet to install some lights in the lake area.



Deadly dengue lurks

CITY CORRESPONDENT

In the absence of surveillance and insecticide spray, the deadly aedes mosquito has returned to the city earlier than expected.

Hospital registers show a significant number of people have been down with dengue. Last month, at least 12 patients received healthcare for dengue in the city's five hospitals and clinics.

Two were admitted to the Shamorita Hospital and the Central Hospital each, one to the Bangladesh Medical and three to the Ibn Sina and Delta Clinic each.

Salma, 27, of Uttara, was admitted to the Central Hospital Tuesday in a

critical condition. With dangerously low count of platelets in the blood, she is fighting for her life, said hospital sources.

Three diagnostic centres -- Lab Aid, Popular and Medinova -- diagnosed 32 patients out of 90 infected with dengue last month.

According to the health directorate control room, 195 people have died of dengue over the last three years, and 14,089 were infected across the country. Fifty-eight people died last year and some 6,000 were infected, most of them city dwellers.

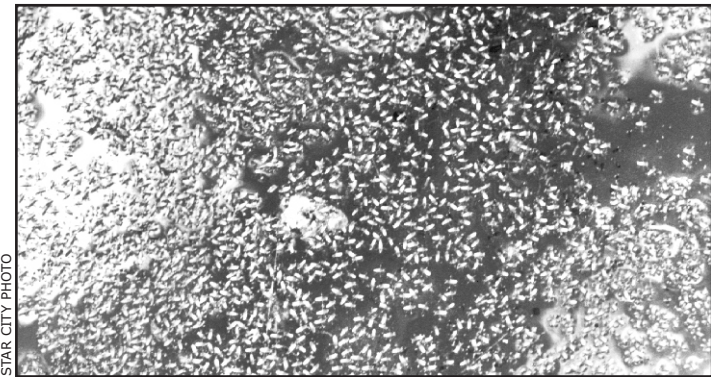
The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives has decided to provide Tk 17 crore to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to

fight dengue outbreak, sources said.

Until recently, the DCC was monitoring the dengue status across the city under the Aedes Surveillance and Monitoring Cell. Last year, the cell identified at least 26 areas, including Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi, Baridhara, Kalabagan, Kanthal Bagan, Jigatala, Lalbagh, Hajaribagh, Shankhari Bazar and the Dhaka Medical College Hospital area, as possible dengue breeding zones. The areas are still "risky", say DCC sources.

But the monitoring cell was closed mysteriously amid countrywide spread of dengue last year.

Experts fear the DCC will not be able to deal with dengue this year due



to lack of surveillance and monitoring.

The DCC's efforts to control the deadly disease are restricted to a

cleanliness programme from April 15. No one knows how effective the drive will be to contain the spread of dengue.

Numbers that bail you out

CITY CORRESPONDENT

For an emergency call 999 and someone at the other end would be there to take you out of trouble.

Surprised? Not unusual, for most of the people don't care much to know the telephone number of the nearest police station! But when burglars or robbers do intrude into their house, dialling 999 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) can fetch one "the men in blue" for help.

Knowing the three-digit, simplest of numbers may make a whole lot of difference when it matters most. You may dial 17 for inquiry or 9 for the operator should you need specific help.

"Most of the phone calls request for connecting them to a specific police station," said Masud Karim a constable working at emergency police service. "However, in cases of serious criminal incidents, the caller cannot even hold the line and we ask the nearest police station to reach the trouble spot," he added.

At least 30 people work in three shifts. The are supposed to work for eight hours, but often it stretches up to twelve hours. After all, no less than 60 phone calls come to them each hour.

After the police help line comes the one of the Fire Service and Civil Defence. It extends service not only in case of a fire incident but also

provides fast and cheap ambulance service.

Dial 9556667 for the Fire Brigade and Civil Defence Headquarters at Siddique Bazar if you forget the

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number of your local fire station. A good 13 to 14 fire stations are in the city to help those in distress out.

"We contact the station nearest to

the place of incident through wireless and make sure the team reaches there as soon as possible," noted Irin Parveen, who works at Fire Service Headquarter.

Only ten people work in three shifts to serve the people through telephone. However, more hands are needed since the lack of manpower often causes problems.

Titas Gas also provides emergency service for twenty-four hours a day. It has 11 well-equipped teams ready to serve the city in five zones. "Sometimes the caller is taken aback by the speed at which our team reaches the place of incident," claimed Gazi Mohammed Abdul Quddus, who works in the emer-

gency service of Titas gas.

Scores of prank calls are also made. "Often there is a call seeking help for a robbery somewhere in the locality. But the police find nothing once on the spot," grumbles constable Masud Karim.

The fire service offices also face the same problem. "Most of the time we rush to a spot and find nothing happened there," said Irin Parveen, telephone operator at the fire brigade headquarters. Though most of the crisis telephone numbers are easily accessible, 8117829-31 is different. It is a PABX number of Dhaka WASA which is rarely picked up!

crisistelephonenumbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114

Modhuban Courier Service- 9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
United Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

National
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9,

7100842-4
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222
Solphin Courier- 9558802
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751

UTILITY

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

Museum and Zoo

National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed

Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed
Sonargoan Jadughar
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday Closed
Dhaka Zoo- 9002954, 9002020
Open: 9am 5 pm, Sunday Closed

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab
Comfort 881710-4
Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477, 0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611

Capital 9352847
Union 8130485
Kool 0171826731
Black Cab
Cab Ex 9358401
Cabline 8321162
JBS Cab 019364575
Sajan 018126036
Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Cab One 7113282-3
Palki 0171052500
Cab I 7113282
Jatri 0171540074
Nipun 9572277
R-Cab 8914782
Star Cab 9571919
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675
KGN 8620011

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express
Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm

Mahanagar Prabhati
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm

Mahanagar Godhuli
Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 9-11 pm

Turna
Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am

Parabat Express
Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am
Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm

Joyantika Express
Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 6-40 am

Upaban Express
Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm

Tista Express
Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11-55

Ekata Express
Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm
Reaches Noakhali at 1-35 pm

Upakul Express
Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am
Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

Padma Express
Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm